

## 36

*On the Wooden Image of Kannon Revealing  
Divine Power<sup>1</sup>*

In the reign of ex-Emperor Shōmu, the head of the image of Kannon, the attendant image on the east side of the Amida<sup>2</sup> in the golden hall of Shimotsuke-dera 下毛野寺<sup>3</sup> in the capital of Nara, fell off for no apparent reason. The patron of the temple discovered this and planned to repair it the next day. He came back to find that the head had returned to its place of its own accord, just as it had been before, and that now it gave off light.

Indeed we know that the dharma-body of wisdom<sup>4</sup> exists. This is a miraculous sign to bring the faithless to a realization of this.

## 37

*On the Wooden Image of Kannon Which Revealed  
Divine Power, and Survived Fire<sup>1</sup>*

In the reign of Emperor Shōmu, a wooden image of Bodhisattva Shōkanjizai 正觀自在菩薩<sup>2</sup> was enshrined and venerated at a mountain temple of Upper Chinu, Izumi district, Izumi province 泉國泉郡珍努上.<sup>3</sup> Once a fire broke out and consumed the sacred hall. The wooden image of the Bodhisattva Kannon took about twenty steps out of the hall and lay down without sustaining any damage.

Indeed, we know that the Three Treasures shows its divine power although it cannot be recognized visually, having neither form nor mind.<sup>4</sup> This is the first of all wonders.

1. Cf. *Konjaku monogatari* (XVI, 11).

2. Kannon is made an attendant of Amida in the scriptures of the pure land school. See *Kanmuryōju-kyō* 觀無量壽經 (*Taishō*, XII, 265c).

3. See II.35, n. 6; Fukuyama, *Narachi jūin*, 194–198.

4. 理智法身 *richi-hosshin*; *dharmakāya* as embodiment of truth and wisdom. 理 often signifies the *tathatā*, supreme truth, true nature.

1. Cf. *Konjaku monogatari* (XVI, 12).

2. Kannon of the *Hoke-kyō*, *Muryōju-kyō*, *Kegon-gyō*, etc., in contrast to many Tantric variations of Kannon 變化觀音.

3. See II.2, n. 3.

4. 非色非心.

## 38

*On Rebirth as a Snake Because of Avarice<sup>1</sup>*

In the reign of Emperor Shōmu, there was a monk who lived in a mountain temple of Maniwa 馬庭山寺<sup>2</sup> in the capital of Nara. When he was on the point of death, he said to his disciples, "After I die, you must not open the door of my room until three years have passed."

Seven times seven days after his death, a huge venomous snake was found lying at the door of the room. As the disciples understood why it had come, they counseled it, opened the door of the room, and found thirty *kan* of coins secretly stored there. With this money they recited scriptures, practiced good, and accumulated merits for the dead man.

Indeed we know that the dead monk returned in the form of a snake to watch his hidden money because of his strong attachment to it. Here is an apt saying: "Even if you can see the top of Mt. Sumeru,<sup>3</sup> you can never see the top of Mt. Desire."

## 39

*On the Wooden Image of Yakushi Buddha Which Showed  
an Extraordinary Sign, Washed away in the  
Water and Buried in the Sand<sup>1</sup>*

Between Suruga province 駿河國<sup>2</sup> and Tōtōmi province 遠江國<sup>3</sup> there flowed the river Ōigawa 大井河. Beside the river was the village of Uda 鵜田, which is in Harihara district 榛原郡, Tōtōmi province.<sup>4</sup> In the third month in the spring of the fifth year of the dog, the second

1. Cf. *Konjaku monogatari* (XX, 24).

2. Fukuyama locates it in the precincts of Tōdai-ji, near Maniwa no saka along the Saho River 佐保川. See his *Narachi jūin*, 277.

3. A cosmic mountain which stands in the center of the world. Taishakuten 帝釋天 resides on its summit.

1. Cf. *Konjaku monogatari* (XII, 12), *Genkō shakusho* (XXVIII).

2. Present Shizuoka-ken 静岡縣.

3. Present Shizuoka-ken.

4. Unidentified.

year of the Tenpyō hōji era, in the reign of Emperor Ōhi 大炊天皇<sup>5</sup> who resided at Nara Palace, a voice crying, "Take me out! Take me out!" was heard from the sand on the beach at the village of Uda.

At that time a monk was traveling in Tōtōmi province, and, when he happened to pass the spot, he heard the voice calling persistently to be let out. The monk answered and could hear the voice coming from under the sand. Suspecting that some dead person buried there might have come to life, he dug and found a wooden image of Yakushi Buddha 藥師佛, six feet five inches high, with both ears missing. In tears, he paid homage to it, saying, "Great Master, what offense caused you to be a victim of flood? As I was destined by karma to find you, will you please let me repair you?"

He organized devotees,<sup>6</sup> invited a sculptor to fix the ears of the Buddha, and built a hall in the village of Uda to enshrine and venerate it. It is now called Uda-dō 鵜田堂. Clergy and laymen all revered this Buddha, for it gave off light, revealing a miraculous sign, and generously granted their wishes.

It was similar to the sandalwood statue made by Uten 優填<sup>7</sup> which stood up to pay homage to Buddha, or the wooden image of Tinglan's mother<sup>8</sup> which moved as if alive as tradition says.<sup>9</sup>

## 40

### *On the Evil-loving Man Who Was Killed with Swords and Thus Got an Immediate Death Penalty<sup>1</sup>*

Tachibana no asomi Naramaro 橘朝臣諾樂麻呂<sup>2</sup> was a son of Prince Kazuraki 葛木王.<sup>3</sup> With overweening ambition he planned to usurp

5. Emperor Jun'nin (r. 758–764). This event took place in 758.

6. 知識 *chishiki*; see Chap. I(1)d, nn. 110, 111.

7. Udayana, king of the Kushan Empire, patron of Buddhism.

8. See I.17, n. 11.

9. *Shokyō yōshū*, XV (Taishō, LIV, 74). 昔優填初刻梅檀...皆現寫真容工圖妙相 故能流光動瑞...丁蘭溫清竭誠 木母以之變色. See Haraguchi, "Nihon ryōiki shūten goku kanken," *Kuntengo to kuntei shiryō*, No. 34 (December 1966), 53–67.

1. Cf. *Shoku Nihongi*, XX (Tenpyō hōji 1:7:2, 3, 4). Similar to II.1, 35 and III.36 in the sense that men of high status and influence were punished as a consequence of their bad deeds and that none of these events are recorded in court histories.

2. Naramaro planned a rebellion against Fujiwara no Nakamaro (see III.38) with the support of Empress Kōken and Empress dowager Kōmyō. The rebellion failed and he died in 757.

3. (d. 757). In 736 Prince Kazuraki succeeded to his mother's surname and called himself Tachibana no Moroe 橘諸兄. He became Chancellor of the Senior First Rank, but was forced to resign by Fujiwara no Nakamaro in 736 and died in the following year. See *Shoku Nihongi*, XIX (Tenpyō shōhō 8:2:2).

the throne and summoned rebels to consult with him on the possibilities for a rebellion. He painted a monk's figure as a target and tried to shoot out the pupils of its eyes.<sup>4</sup> He loved to do evil deeds, but none was more evil than this.

Once a slave<sup>5</sup> of Naramaro went to Nara hills 諾樂山<sup>6</sup> to hunt birds with a hawk and found many young foxes there. He caught and skewered them with a stick, leaving the stick standing at the opening of the fox hole. Now, this man had a baby. The mother fox, seeking revenge, turned itself into the baby's grandmother. She took the baby in her arms and carried it to the entrance of the hole, threading it on a skewer and leaving it standing at the entrance as the man had done to her children.

Even a humble animal has the means to repay an evil deed. Immediate retribution lies at hand. How can we live without compassion? Merciless deeds will incur merciless revenge. Thus, Naramaro fell into disgrace with the emperor and was put to death not long after. We learn, therefore, that his evil deed in the above story was an omen of his fate of being killed by the sword. This is also a miraculous event.

## 41

### *On a Woman Who Survived Violation of a Big Snake Owing to the Power of Drugs<sup>1</sup>*

In the village of Umakai, Sarara district, Kawachi province 河内國更荒郡馬甘里,<sup>2</sup> there was a girl from a wealthy family. In Emperor Ōhi's reign, in the fourth month in the summer of the sixth year of the boar, the third year of the Tenpyō hōji era,<sup>3</sup> the girl climbed a mulberry tree to pick leaves. A large snake crawled up the tree after

4. According to Kitayama, the monk may be Gyōgi who sided with Fujiwara no Nakamaro. This is why Kyōkai wrote about the retribution of Naramaro as well as Prince Nagaya who was also opposed to Nakamaro. See Kitayama, *Nihon kodai seijishi*, 269–330.

5. 奴 *yakko*, the same as *nuhi*; see Chap. I(1) a, n. 24.

6. Nara-yama, present Sahosaki kyūryō 佐保佐紀丘陵; hills north of Nara between Nara Basin and Kyoto Basin.

1. Cf. *Konjaku monogatari shū* (XXIV, 9). Buddhist adaptation of the snake-lover theme which is also found in II.8, 12. According to Fujisawa Morihiko, a similar legend is found in the tradition of a tribe in Taiwan (see his *Nihon densetsu kenkyū*, IV, 43). A condensed translation of this story is given by D. L. Philippi, "Ancient Tales of Supernatural Marriage," *Today's Japan*, V (No. 3, 1960), 19–23.

2. Present Kita-kawachi-gun, Ōsaka-fu.

3. 759.